



Title: MSC-Southeast Technical Assessment of Student Learning


Date Begun: 05/05

Status: Current

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Note: Some institutions have elected not to share all information with the public. Therefore you may notice some fields on the form are not filled out.


Description 

The college will implement three phased projects to enhance college-wide practices of improving student learning through the assessment of program outcomes, to support the integration of assessment methodologies into current practices, and to guide the college in demonstrating knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of vital assessment practices. Through this systematic approach to measuring student learning, the college will integrate the use of assessment data to aid in program planning, budgeting, and determining professional development needs within a consistent and continual cycle of improvement.

Phase I: DIPLOMA = Data Integrity; Program Learning Outcomes; Meta-assessment of Assessment

Phase II: CLOSE-UP = Common Learning Outcomes at Southeast – Upgrading (assessment) Practices

Phase III: A-PLUS = Assessment – Planning, Leading, Understanding Students

Related AQIP Criteria 

Primary	#1: Helping Students Learn
Related	#7: Measuring Effectiveness

Related	#8: Planning for Continuous Improvement
Related	#3: Understanding Student Needs

Related AQIP Principles 

Principle	#1: Focus – on students’ and other stakeholders’ needs
Principle	#4: Learning – environment centering attention on learning
Principle	#9: Information – to support analysis and decision-making and to measure performance realistically

Rationale for Action 


The college has long recognized the need for a systematic, faculty-driven approach to assessment and has made progress toward structured integration into the learning culture. The college is prepared to move beyond the formative stage where faculty have determined program outcomes and have begun to gather tools to assess and interpret assessment data. In support of this recognized need, an AQIP Review Panel conducted a Focus Visit on Student Assessment November 2 & 3, 2004. In their report, the Review Panel recommended the “immediate implementation of a required AQIP Action Project on Student Assessment. The Action Project should provide for the following items [Phase indicators added]:

- Advancement of the program review and evaluation process [Phase I, II, III]
- Development of a formal process for peer evaluation of faculty [Phase III]
- Development of a process for evaluating employer satisfaction with graduates beyond initial survey following employment [Phase II, III],
- Evidence that clearly ties assessment results into planning and budgeting processes [Phase II, III],
- Evidence that the college-wide support and understanding of assessment is improving [Phases I, II, III],
- Evidence that the faculty are demonstrating the use of assessment methodologies (i.e. assessment grid, etc) [Phase I, II, III],
- Improved and additional systems for student assessment (e.g. peer evaluation, capstone courses, etc.) [Phase II, III],
- Improved use and support of institutional research in the assessment and planning process [Phase I, II, III],”

(AQIP Review Panel report – Institutional Change Minnesota State College-Southeast Technical, 2004, pages 5 and 6)

Areas Affected 

Academic departments and programs, Academic Affairs, Institutional Research, Information Technology; Publications; Recruiting; Advisory Boards

Processes Affected 

Program review, curriculum review, program planning; institutional reporting; student learning assessment; assessment needs assessment; preparation of academic publications; recruiting

Process Measures 

Faculty participation in academic data verification activities; design (and beta test) of program database; faculty review of program five-year trend data; curriculum committee evaluation of pilot program review recommendations; faculty participation in current meta-assessment activities; categorization/synthesis of assessment activities 2000-2004; timely submission of assessment related reports/information; timely submission of program review related reports/information; development of data reporting process; attendance at assessment related activities; attendance at data integrity activities;

Outcome Measures 

Phase DIPLOMA: Elimination of duplicate “databases” of program information; timely and accurate submission of current program plans to MnSCU (resulting in an accurate inventory); adoption of revised curriculum/program approval procedures; adoption of academic data custodianship policy; college-wide use of data-base program and course information (faculty use, recruiting, college publications); compilation/communication of meta-assessment of assessment (benchmarking/documenting current practices and understandings)

Phase CLOSE-UP: Identification of common student learning outcomes; increased assessment of embedded general education outcomes in the technical trades; documented improved/increased/enhanced program assessment practices

Phase A-PLUS: Documented use of assessment of student learning in budget and planning processes (as included in guidelines, published planning materials, MnSCU reports, budget trends, program reviews; increased participation in faculty development activities related to assessment; implementation of and participation in faculty peer review (exceeding Southeast Tech’s implementation attempt of 2002)

Performance Targets 

Time Frame	This Project will span three years as submitted and will incorporate program review & evaluation, peer faculty evaluation, employer satisfaction, and integration of assessment results into planning and budgeting as facilitation tools throughout this project.
Phase I – DIPLOMA 05/05 – 10/05	Quantitative and Qualitative Stretch Targets
Data Integrity	All programs verify academic data; The newly designed Academic Data Management System (ADMS) will be fully operational by September 2005; All faculty will be trained on ADMS by fall 2005; All (2005-2006) academic publications will contain accurate program/course information; All MnSCU 2005-2006 (and beyond) reports requiring academic data will be timely/accurate; All data custodial issues will be addressed no later than September 2005; All faculty will report satisfaction with ADMS.
Program Learning Outcomes	All programs have all student learning outcomes written in form “Graduates of program ____ will be able to ...” no later than August 2005. All programs will have distinguished between program student learning outcomes and program outcomes. Seventy-five percent of programs will have met individually with VPAA by August 2005 to discuss 2004-05 assessment grids, receiving feedback and guidance.

Assessment Action Project template - final 6.20.05

	Program Review Guidelines will be refined to emphasize assessment of student learning (four programs will begin program review fall 2005) under new guidelines
Team Development	Develop expertise among action project team members, AP co-leads, and assessment coordinators, creating the core group to provide feedback, guidance and to detail-plan Phases II and III.
Meta-Analysis	All programs will report appropriate direct and indirect measures of student learning outcomes assessed in 2004-2005. 75% will be reported by due date. All programs will report increased understanding. Faculty will indicate individual and collective training needs. Roles of Assessment Coordinators and project team will be clarified. The first stage of the meta-analysis (student learning outcomes and measures used by programs) will be reported 08/05. All programs will report their 2004-05 assessment results and analysis no later than 10/05.
Phase II – CLOSE-UP 10/05 –06/06	Results and Use of Results
Data Integrity	No data custodial issues will be reported; All faculty and staff will report continued satisfaction with ADMS. No data integrity issues will be reported
Program Learning Outcomes	2005-06 fall faculty/staff workshop will include specific assessment activities that address required focus visit issues: All faculty will participate in discussions of assessment data analysis. All faculty/staff will participate in discussions of identifying common student learning outcomes. All programs will report their 2005-06 assessment plans (student learning outcomes and measures) no later than 10/05. At least half of technical degree programs will identify and measure embedded general education competencies in 2005-06.
Meta-Analysis	The 2004-05 meta-assessment will be completed and presented to the college by 03/06. The stage one meta-assessment of 2005-06 assessment plans will be completed. There will be qualitative and quantitative improvements between 2004-05 and 2005-06 stage one meta-assessments.
Planning	The program review reports for the four programs using the revised 2005-06 Program Review guidelines will reflect improved integration into planning and budgeting processes, and report professional development needs. Develop quantitative and qualitative stretch targets for Phase III.
Feedback	The AQIP Steering Committee will monitor performance targets, provide quarterly feedback, and, as necessary, request detailed action plans.
Phase III – A-PLUS 06/06 – 05/07	Documentation and Continuous Improvement
Planning	Quantitative and qualitative stretch targets for Phase III will be developed during Phase II.

Keeping Focus



The AQIP Steering Committee will monitor performance targets, provide quarterly feedback, and, as necessary, request detailed action plans. The Academic Affairs and Standards Council will oversee this action project and, as necessary, request detailed action plans related to assessment and program review. Academic Affairs will provide appropriate time for discussions and reports during faculty/staff workshop days. Academic Affairs will provide annual (at a minimum) feedback to programs and related committees regarding the state of assessment at Southeast Technical.

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September, 2007 Annual Update + Comments

A. Describe the past year's accomplishments and the current status of this Action Project.

Data Integrity • The Academic Data Management System (ADMS) was migrated to a new server. Information Technology (IT) and Academic Affairs (AA) spent several weeks to be sure that there were no security issues: confidentiality, possession, integrity, authenticity, availability, and utility (as outlined in Figure 7.4 in our Systems Portfolio, submitted June 2007) • Academic Affairs identified two report formatting issues with the ADMS which are being addressed. These formatting reports permit drawing down of data properly formatted for our catalog, handbooks, and marketing materials without direct formatting intervention. • Current status – Data Integrity: o ADMS conversion completed; catalog and handbook report formats implemented; additional report formats will be implemented as needed o Data verification/monitoring processes in place; faculty verification as needed/on-going Program Learning Outcomes • In 2005, Academic Affairs conducted a meta-assessment of college-wide assessment practices. The meta-assessment categorized each program's PLOs as Entry-Level Technical Skills and Knowledge, Professional Behaviors and Attitudes, or Certification/Licensure Examinations. The meta-analysis revealed that faculty do an excellent job of assessing course learning outcomes. Several programs are doing an exemplary job of assessing program outcomes, some are doing an adequate job, and many have an uneven approach mixing course and program outcomes in their assessment plans. In response, faculty designed and implemented a faculty-driven initiative on assessment of student learning during 2006-07. o More than 50% of faculty (representing 75% of all programs) participated in this Faculty Excellence Project which required faculty participants to □ engage in 8 to 10 biweekly group learning sessions; □ complete required readings (e.g., Assessing Student Learning – a common sense guide by Linda Suskie), □ engage in individual and group projects (which lead to an assessment plan); □ submit a program/discipline assessment plan; and □ evaluate the project. • All Advisory Committees validated “entry level” for their programs/disciplines (see process revision below) • Consulted with MnSCU Leadership Development Team who have contracted with MSC-ST to design a research project to assess technology-based study systems (e.g., Tegrity). Initial results suggest there are important and significant benefits for students and faculty using the Tegrity system. Tegrity claims it “targets how the student studies from and engages with knowledge presented in the classroom” and that it “efficiently improves learning outcomes.” Tegrity does integrate governance tools to provide data on numbers of students reviewing recordings and utilizing Tegrity Pens. However, Tegrity provides only anecdotal data to support the claim it efficiently improves learning outcomes. To move beyond anecdotal evidence, we partnered with participants of the MnSCU Luoma Leadership Academy who designed a research study of the impact of Instructional Archiving and Study Systems such as Tegrity on students, faculty, and program utilization. Goals include determining instructor (course) strategies that could promote enhancement/improvement of student study behaviors, program strategies that would promote larger improvement of student learning outcomes within a degree program, and

institutional return on investment.

- Process revisions
 - o Program review: Based on the 2005 pilot program, we revised the Program Review elements (data reports, reporting mechanisms and forms) and timeline. The Academic Affairs and Standards Council approved revisions December, 2006.
 - o Assessment guidelines: Stemming from the Faculty Excellence Grant project (see 1P6), faculty, in concert with administration, designed an initiative on the assessment of student learning. As an outcome of the initiative, faculty proposed a revised Assessment Plan and timeline. Academic affairs endorsed the revisions which were approved by the Academic Affairs and Standards Council in 2007.
 - o Advisory committee processes: We revised the Advisory Committee Handbook to include a meeting agenda and required discussion items focused on program learning outcomes (“entry level” expectations), measures, and instructional strategies. In addition, we designed a required “Recommendation and Action Items” reporting mechanism. We no longer require meeting minutes/notes be submitted to the Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs.
- Current status – Program Learning Outcomes
 - o All programs were required to submit their 2007-08 assessment plans by April 30, 2007. To date 28 (of 35 programs) have met their obligation; of the 7 programs not meeting the date, one program has no permanent faculty and the sole faculty member of another program was on medical leave. A subcommittee of the Academic Affairs and Standards Council reviewed the assessment plans during summer 2007 and prepared individual program feedback shared at the August 23 workshop. Deans and coordinators will meet with individual programs to provide feedback and assist with any revisions. Revisions, if required, are to be submitted by November 2007 so that all plans can be implemented in 2008.
- Common Learning Outcomes (CLO) [Note: MSC-ST requires each diploma program to have a minimum of 25% general education content. At least 15% of the content must come from general education courses including at least two credits of mathematics and two credits of English. The remaining percentage may come from assessable general education content embedded within program courses that represent the college’s overall general education goals.
- We have designed a project to assess student learning of nine common learning goals:
 - o By May 2006, each diploma program identified courses in which the nine common learning outcomes are embedded and estimated the credit hour equivalent.
 - o By October 2006 General Education confirmed that all diploma programs met the embedded general education credit hour criterion.
 - o In 2007-2008, programs will be required to describe instructional and assessment activities used to verify students meet the competencies.
- During spring 2007, Program Advisory Committee members were asked to rate the importance of each of the nine CLOs (see Figure 1.10 in our Systems Portfolio, submitted June 2007).
- In response to a directive from the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, General Education submitted its plan for conducting comprehensive review of the courses included in its Minnesota transfer curriculum (MnTC) during FY2007.
- Gen ed faculty in math, science, humanities, English, and Spanish have written competencies for relevant CLOs (to be vetted throughout the college during 2007-08)

Review (09-14-07):

This project is a good match to the AQIP standard of helping students learn. You have been very successful in implementation of your assessment plans, but neglected to note how you will deal with those departments not currently in compliance. The importance of assessing general education requirements cannot be overstated in this era of accountability. It is impressive that your faculty have been able to agree on nine common learning goals. This shows a high level of collaboration which is a hallmark of a high performing institution. Overall, this is a well done, well executed project.

B. Describe how the institution involved people in work on this Action Project.

Current Action Project coordinators are the interim Dean of General Education and two faculty members. A broader facilitation team (their duties including communicating progress and maintaining project awareness) includes college deans and coordinators, including the college AQIP coordinator, in consultation with the Vice-President for Academic Affairs. The task at hand dictates the mode of communication. Data Integrity • Continued/ongoing verification of all course and program information (currency and accuracy) • Electronic sharing and verification of data • Continued/ongoing faculty training on ADMS • Continual validation of course and program information via program advisory committee interaction Program Learning Outcomes • Year-long implementation of Faculty Excellence Project on assessment of student learning • Review of related Systems Portfolio responses Common Learning Outcomes • Program advisory committee members surveyed on importance of CLOs • Continual identification of general education goals necessary within technical program “entry level” requirements – interaction among faculty and advisory committees. • General Education department meetings (goal audit) • Continual Email interaction and personal contact to collect and verify data • Review of related Systems Portfolio responses Faculty workshop sessions • August 2006 – Making assessment relevant (Key note address) • March 2007 – What do we expect from our students? (large group facilitation) • March 2007 – Assessing student learning: the next step. (large group facilitation - faculty)

Review (09-14-07):

Your institution has been very successful in integrating this project throughout the culture of organization. It might be helpful to your ongoing training efforts to develop a survey/assessment instrument to determine the level of actual buy-in versus compliance of your faculty and constituent groups. This could further drive your ongoing communication and training activities. This will be important moving forward to insure that this project has been integrated into the core fabric of the institution.

C. Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project.

Data Integrity • All critical data entry is complete. We will continue to populate the ADMS with non-critical program and course data e.g., web page content, marketing blurbs, catalog discipline descriptions. • Continue routine data verification of new/revised entries. • Fully implement report formatting to eliminate extra formatting intervention Program Learning Outcomes • Review and provide feedback on assessment plans: Fully implement a faculty-driven project (2006-07) on assessing student learning o Faculty complete application to project (by September 15, 2006) o Conduct group learning sessions, readings, and projects (October 2006 – March 2007) o Submit discipline/program assessment plans (April 30, 2007) o Final reports/evaluation (April 30, 2007) • Implement the research design: Consult with MnSCU Leadership Development Team who have contracted with MSC-ST to design a research project to assess technology-based study systems (e.g., Tegrity) Common Learning Outcomes • Complete assessment of MnTC courses (Fall 2007) • Survey faculty on CLOs • Determine how diploma programs verify/measure competencies of embedded gen ed • Vet the newly minted gen ed competencies (math, science, English, humanities, Spanish) with all faculty

Review (09-14-07):

It appears that you are close to completing the implementation phase and closing this project. Please consider presenting, if you have not already done so, at the annual meeting. Your institution has done a great job with this project and should have many best practices to share. You will need to carefully consider how you keep the momentum going once this initial phase is complete.

D. Describe any "effective practice(s)" that resulted from your work on this Action Project.

• ADMS design • Embedded general education assessment practice • Advisory Committee handbook, meeting agenda, and action item reporting form • Faculty Excellence Project: Assessment of Student Learning • Meta-assessment of Assessment • Directed feedback to faculty

Review (09-14-07):

As noted above I agree you have some great best practices to share with other institutions. Given the current climate of accountability and push to assessment for higher education it would be a benefit to the entire community for your to share your insights and successes with this plan. The most important contribution that appears to move beyond best practices to new practice is the Meta-assessment of Assessment. It would be important to your peers for you to share this project.

E. What challenges, if any, are you still facing in regards to this Action Project?

From our Systems Portfolio: "Faculty are passionate about helping students learn. In classrooms, labs, or wherever they interact with students, they encourage, support and challenge students to be the best they can be. For years, however, their passion for teaching and their understanding of the synergy between teaching and learning was not reflected in our college-wide assessment of student learning. Yet, in the lounge, over lunch, and at dinner seminars, discussions of teaching and learning are lively and compelling. Why the disconnect? The Faculty Excellence Assessment project showed all of us that we had been treating assessment more as a formal "academic exercise" focused on filling out worksheets/grids rather than connecting assessment to the interesting questions faculty ask and their frustrations expressed every day about student learning. Now, we are focusing on questions faculty really want to answer, interacting individually with programs, and building program assessment plans from their questions."

Review (09-14-07):

You may still want to explore the connections between compliance and complete buy-in to the system to make sure that moving forward this is not viewed as just an administrative task, but that faculty view it as an integral component of student learning.

F. If you would like to discuss the possibility of AQIP providing you help to stimulate progress on this action project, explain your need(s) here and tell us who to contact and when?

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